

A quietly spoken and humble man who often spoke of God . . .

Barnard speaks on Sobukwe



DR BARNARD



MR SOBUKWE

CAPE TOWN — Professor Chris Barnard spoke yesterday of his friendship with Mr Robert Sobukwe, the banned former leader of the Pan-Africanist Congress who died in Kimberley on Sunday. He had found Mr Sobukwe, he said, to be "a humble man, a great Christian and a true gentleman."

Professor Barnard, who is paying air fares totalling R4000 to enable three of Mr Sobukwe's children to travel from the United States to attend their father's funeral at Graaff-Reinet, met the banned black leader when he was a patient at Groote Schuur Hospital last year.

After Mr Sobukwe had had a cancerous lung removed in an operation at the hospital, Professor Barnard appealed to the

Minister of Justice, Mr Kruger, to lift the banning order against him as Mr Sobukwe was "obviously a very sick man."

Professor Barnard said yesterday that Mr Sobukwe — when he was at Groote Schuur Hospital last September — was in a ward used by the departments of pulmonary and cardiac surgery.

"I had to visit the ward frequently to see our own cardiac patients, and that is how I came to meet Robert Sobukwe. I was immediately impressed by the fact that here was a very friendly man, with a ready smile, a quietly-spoken and humble man who often spoke of God and who often read the Bible.

"What struck me so forcibly about Sobukwe was that although here was a man who had every reason to be bitter, there was no trace of bitterness in him — and he never

spoke badly about anyone.

"Even when he referred to Mr Pelser (Minister of Justice at the time Mr Sobukwe was first banned) and to Jimmy Kruger, he spoke in kindly terms. He said they had a difficult job to do and that one must not judge them harshly.

"Although we did not talk politics much, it became clear that Sobukwe was still firm in his convictions and that his views had not changed."

"Yet strangely enough the only time I recalled him speaking harshly about anyone was in reference to his own people. He cited certain incidents which, he said, had not done his people any credit and which had in fact reflected badly on them.

"But even where the Security Police were concerned, he never showed any resentment or bitter-

ness. In fact on one occasion when I became rather cross and remonstrated with some Security Police at the hospital, Robert told me not to be angry, that they were just doing their job."

Professor Barnard said he had obtained special permission for Sobukwe to spend a few weeks at the home of a member of the cardiac team, in Cape Town, so that he could have the necessary post-operative check-ups at the hospital before returning to his home in Kimberley.

"What really started our friendship," he said, "was when we found that in our background, we had quite a lot in common. We were both Karoo boys, after all — he from Graaff-Reinet and I from Beaufort West, and in our conversations we found there was much that was similar in the way we grew up in our respective Karoo towns." — Sapa.

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand

Location:- Johannesburg

©2010

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

DOCUMENT DETAILS:

Document ID:- A2618-Cp2-13-32

Document Title:- The Star: Barnard speaks on Sobukwe

Author:- The Star

Document Date:- 1 March 1978